



A Thriving Congregation

A thriving congregation is a thing of beauty – it exhibits the Kingdom of Heaven to the world. Its worship is focused on the living God. Its members share both a keen sense of call to be in ministry together and a clear understanding of their distinctive mission, of the difference they're meant to help Christ make.

Its leaders are self-consciously servants whose attentiveness and care keeps the congregation close to Christ, engaged in its mission, healthy in its functioning, and generous in sharing its gifts with the world. A deep trust in God underlies the openness that characterizes it – its members are open to the direction and encouragement of the Spirit, to taking on challenges, to trying and maybe failing; they are open to learning and to growing in various ways; they are open-hearted toward strangers, open-handed to those in need around them, and ready to receive Christ in them all. When members gather, there is much laughter among them, and not a small amount of prayer; and when they part, the praying continues, so the distance does not diminish the congregation's sense of its unity or the expression of its care.

The congregation sees itself as a treasured part of what God is doing in the world, but only as a part; and therefore it is eager to be in partnership with other congregations, groups and persons through whom God is working. Because it lives both from and for Christ, the congregation is amazingly free, but also intensely engaged; and those who make it up do not hesitate to tell others that their involvement in its life and ministry has been not only life-changing but profoundly satisfying.

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